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# "I Believe in …."

**John 6:56-69**

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**If you've ever had someone complain to you, this sermon is for you! Today we hear about Jesus' own people, his disciples, murmuring at what he is saying. They say: "This teaching is difficult! Who can accept it?" So these disciples sat around and answered their own questions. Probably had some coffee. Stood around a fountain. Watched children play. Hmmm.**

**It doesn't matter what profession you're in particularly, but there are people out there who are writing books to explain why things happen this way or that way. So there are lots of books describing why people drop out of churches. The books say many people drop out of churches because the music isn't upbeat. That's true. Others drop out because the church doesn't offer programs that meet their needs. That's true too. You probably don't need a book to complete the list of those who dropped out because of stepped-on toes, bullies, hurt feelings over recipes that weren't appreciated, power struggles lost, policy decisions, denominational stands, or just a plain dislike of the pastor or the person in the next pew.**

**Hardly anyone talks about the main reason for so many dropouts. They can't believe Christ's claims any more than those who long ago turned away from Jesus could believe them. His teachings are too tough. His demands are too far-reaching. They can't really believe these things. If they did, none of the reasons listed above would be sufficient to make people turn away from the church that is his body.**

**Sure, there has been a lot of over-focusing over the years. Ministers over-focused on fire and brimstone. Other churches over-focused on spiritual gifts and tongues and got into a two tier Christianity. Some ministers went to seminaries that undercut the authority of the Bible. Lots of folk in my generation got involved in social justice ministries without keeping a balance with the need for personal holiness. I meet people all the time whose parents made them go to church thinking that somehow the kids (now grown-up) would sort of morph into Christian adults - but these kids never got beyond the do's and the don'ts to what Church is all about.**

**What's that? Well, church is a place where we all exist to receive ministry and, hopefully, learn how to do ministry. In the best sense, church is a place where we meet Jesus or, at the very least, talk some more about how we are doing with Jesus, and talk about how Jesus in our life has affected how we live.**

**From the standpoint of the Bible, every person has a place in God's love. That alone has been enough to make lots of people turn away. Why? They can't believe it or won't believe it. This talk of God's love calls for people to go beyond their boundaries, their likes and dislikes. God's love is a much harder thing than most people realize. But it's a tremendous thing as well.**

**The high meaning of the parables of the lost sheep, the lost coin, the lost son, is that one person is immeasurably important to God. That may be hard to swallow when we realize it means someone we don't like but it's the very bread of life as well because it means us too.**

**In many congregations, the *Apostles Creed* is read almost every Sunday. Every time I read it, it brings before me the names, faces and lives of those who've lived in a church community with me, the people who have been more committed to Christ than to getting their needs met. In that group there's a young woman who had hoped for a home of her own more than anything else, but the man she loved died suddenly. She will always carry about in her heart, visions of what might have been. What is she saying? "I believe in God the Father Almighty, maker of heaven and earth." Her sorrow has not taken her belief away. She's still with Christ, and Christ is still with her.**

**And, in that group there's a man and it has been tough going for him. Now things are going a bit better but they are still not going that well. Always there is sickness, misfortune, and debt. You might expect a lot of different things on his lips, but what I hear him say when I speak to him is, "I believe in God and in Jesus Christ."**

**In that group is a dear old soul who sees a faint rose tint in the west and knows she doesn't have long to stay here, but she says with all her soul: "I believe in God and in Jesus Christ and in the liefe everlasting!"**

**If you stop to think about it, you may have your own gallery of hearts and faces who have affirmed their faith with you in the *Apostles Creed*. They may still be here with us, or may have joined the 'great cloud of witnesses' the author of Hebrews speaks about (Hebrews 12:1). Think on them for awhile. Realize that their affirmation of faith is indeed a staying with Christ, a refusal to turn away in spite of heartache, anxiety, unmet needs, and even burdens almost too grievous to bear.**

**And if you're in the other category, if you are still waiting to get your list of needs met, then here's a modern proverb for you - You can't steal second base and keep your foot on first base at the same time. Religion, Christianity, isn't about do's and don'ts. It's about a relationship with Jesus Christ. You may not like parts of our worship services, or find our ministries lacking. If you want to get involved in the *doing* of ministry, we have a place right here along side of us for you.**

**We are a people who know Jesus. That's who we are. And that relationship, with Jesus, defines what we do. And that's why I would like to ask you now to stand, and repeat with me, the *Apostles Creed.***

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